

# Fast Facts About Online Learning



## Research, Trends and Statistics

### K-12 Online Learning and Virtual Schools: Expanding Options

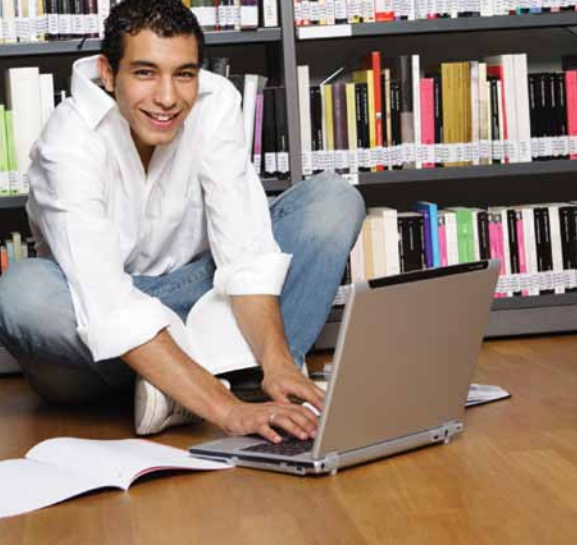
- K-12 online learning is a new field consisting of an estimated \$507 million market, which is growing at an estimated annual pace of 30% annually.
- Supplemental or full-time online learning opportunities are available to at least some students in 48 of the 50 states plus Washington, DC.<sup>i</sup>
- 27 states, as well as Washington, DC, have statewide full-time online schools.<sup>i</sup>
- 38 states have state virtual schools or state-led online initiatives, and Alaska is planning to open a statewide online learning network in 2011.<sup>i</sup>
- Many virtual schools show annual growth rates between 20% and 45%.<sup>ii</sup>
- 75% of school districts had one or more students enrolled in an online or blended learning course.<sup>iii</sup>
- 72% of school districts with distance education programs planned to expand online offerings in the coming year.<sup>iv</sup>
- 14.2 million computers were available for classroom use in the nation's schools as of the 2005-2006 school year. That works out to one computer for every four students.<sup>v</sup>
- 82% of high school administrators interviewed in the U.S. had at least one student enrolled in a fully online course and 38% had at least one student enrolled in a blended or hybrid course.<sup>vi</sup>

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership association based in the Washington, DC area with more than 3,200 members. We are unique; our members represent a diverse cross-section of K-12 education from school districts, charter schools, state education agencies, non-profit organizations, research institutions, corporate entities and other content and technology providers.

iNACOL's mission is to ensure all students have access to world-class education and quality online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime for success.

iNACOL facilitates advocacy, research, professional development and networking to expand the availability and enhance the quality of K-12 online learning.

iNACOL hosts the annual Virtual School Symposium, the leading K-12 national education conference on virtual schools and online learning in Indianapolis, IN, November 13 – 15, 2011. For more information, [www.virtualschoolsymposium.org](http://www.virtualschoolsymposium.org)



According to the 2009 Sloan Consortium report, K-12 school district administrators cited “offering courses not otherwise available at the school” as the top reason they perceive online and blended courses to be important.



## Online learning in K-12 schools is growing explosively.

- In April 2006, Michigan became the 1<sup>st</sup> state to require online learning for high school graduation. In 2008, Alabama added a high school graduation distance/online learning requirement, as well.
- 80% of K-12 school districts cited “the course was otherwise unavailable” as the number one reason for offering courses at a distance.<sup>vii</sup>
- According to the 2009 Sloan Consortium report, K-12 school district administrators cited “offering courses not otherwise available at the school,” “meeting the needs of specific groups of students,” and “offering Advanced Placement or college-level courses” as the top three reasons they perceive online and blended courses to be important.<sup>iii</sup>
- When considering online education for either students in rural communities who have “access to only a limited number of course offerings in their public schools” or advanced students interested in taking courses for college credit, the public expresses considerable support. In these two instances, over 60% of respondents support public funding for online education.<sup>viii</sup>

## The number of K-12 enrollments has been increasing steadily over the past decade.

- In 2000, there were 40,000-50,000 enrollments in K-12 online education.<sup>ix</sup>
- Eduventures estimated 300,000 students participated in virtual learning in the 2002-2003 school year in the United States.<sup>x</sup> Alberta Online Consortium in Canada reported 4,766 enrollments in 2002-2003.
- In 2002-2003, NCES reported 328,000 distance education enrollments in K-12 public school districts.<sup>xi</sup>
- iNACOL estimates a total of 1,500,000 K-12 students were enrolled in online learning courses in 2009.
- In 2006, the Sloan Consortium reported 700,000 enrollments in K-12 online learning. According to the Sloan Consortium, the overall number of K-12 students engaged in online courses in 2007-2008, is estimated at 1,030,000. This represents a 47% increase since 2005-2006.<sup>xii</sup>

- In 2006, Sloan Consortium reported there were 3.2 million post secondary students in the United States that took at least one online course; this represents a 25% increase over the previous year. By 2008, the Sloan Consortium indicated this number had grown to 4 million.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Enrollment province-wide in British Columbia climbed from 17,000 students in 2006 to 33,000 students in 2007, according to Canada's Ministry of Education statistics.
- There are an estimated 3 million enrollments in online and blended courses in K-12 education. Of these, there are 437,000 course enrollments in state virtual schools<sup>i</sup> and 200,000 full-time students in full-time online schools in the U.S.<sup>xiv</sup> These 200,000 students include 119,920 students in 220 virtual charter schools from 26 states.<sup>xv</sup>

## Research Reports “As Good or Better”: Effective

According to NCREL *Synthesis of New Research on K-12 Online Learning*:<sup>xvi</sup>

- U.S. Department of Education Study of Online Learning, “Evaluation of Evidence-based Practice in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies” (2009)
- “Overall, the meta-analysis found that students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.”
- “Instruction combining online learning with face-to-face elements had a larger advantage... students the participated in online learning and who spent more time on task benefited the most.”

## Today's Students

The Pew Internet Project reports “the Internet is an important element in the overall educational experience of many teenagers”:<sup>xvii</sup>

- 87% of all youth between the ages of 12 and 17 use the Internet (21 million people).
- 86% percent of teens, 88% of online teens, and 80% of all parents believe that the Internet helps teenagers to do better in school.
- 85% of 17 year olds have gone online to get information about a college, university, or other school they were thinking about attending.



**50% of students are  
creators of content  
on the Internet.**



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### Highlights from the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education Issue Brief on Rates of Computer and Internet Use by Children in Nursery School and Students in Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade:<sup>xviii</sup>

- The use of computer technology begins at young ages; 67% of children in nursery school were computer users, as were 80 percent of those in kindergarten.
- By high school, nearly all students (97%) used computers, and a majority (80%) used the Internet.
- Computer and Internet use was more widespread among school-age children and adolescents than among adults (DeBell and Chapman 2003).
- 100% of schools are connected to the Internet.<sup>xix</sup>
- The use of computers and the Internet may improve people's everyday lives and improve their labor market prospects. Because these technologies have the potential to improve access to information, help to get tasks done better or more quickly, and facilitate communication (see National Research Council 1999), computer and internet use rates may be considered indicators of the standard of living.
- Also, the use of computers helps students gain experience with this technology, so use rates may indicate how well prepared the current generation of students is to enter a workforce where the ability to use a computer is expected (U.S. Department of Education 1999).
- 15% of public school instructional rooms have wireless Internet Access (NCES 2007).<sup>xx</sup>

## High School Reform and Redesign

- Data suggest that in about six years 10% of all courses will be computer-based, and by 2019 about 50% of courses will be delivered online.<sup>xxi</sup>
- 90% of the fastest growing jobs in the economy require a college degree.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Over 40% of our nation's high schools do not offer any AP courses. Many of these schools serve predominantly low-income and minority students.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- Virtual schools and online programs provide AP courses.
- While only 44% of U.S. high school students studied a foreign language in 2002, learning a second or third foreign language is compulsory for students in the European Union and elsewhere.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- Virtual schools offer foreign language courses online that allow interactive communication and collaboration with students and teachers across state and national boundaries for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.





## Current *i*NACOL Initiatives

**Virtual School Symposium  
Annual Conference: November  
13-15, 2011 in Indianapolis, IN**

***i*NACOL Monthly Leadership  
Webinars the Second  
Wednesday of Every Month**

**New *i*NACOL “Teacher Talk”  
Webinars for Instructors in  
Online Programs**

**K-12 Online Learning  
Reports and Resources  
on [www.inacol.org](http://www.inacol.org):**

Virtual Schools and 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century Skills

*i*NACOL Primer on K-12  
Online Learning

*i*NACOL National Standards  
for Quality Online Teaching

*i*NACOL National Standards  
for Quality Online Programs

**How To Start An  
Online Program:  
[www.onlineprogramhowto.org](http://www.onlineprogramhowto.org)**

***i*NACOL State Needs  
Assessments for Online  
Courses and Services**

***i*NACOL National Standards  
of Quality for Online Courses**

**Online Professional  
Development**

***i*NACOL Experts: Advice and  
Networking**

More information is available  
online at [www.inacol.org](http://www.inacol.org).

## High School Reform and Redesign

- 52% of middle school and 15% of high school mathematics teachers did not have a major or minor in mathematics and 40% of middle school and 11% of high school science teachers did not have a major or minor in science.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- Virtual schools and online programs provide a range of courses such as science, math, foreign languages, electives and remedial courses with highly qualified teachers.
- According to the Manhattan Institute, 70% of all students in public high schools graduate, and only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend four-year colleges.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- The high school graduation rate in the United States is 70%. High school drop-out rates in urban areas average 50%.<sup>xxv</sup>
- Only 51% of all black students and 52% of all Hispanic students graduate, and only 20% of all black students and 16% of all Hispanic students leave high school college-ready.
- According to recent research from the Silent Epidemic study, 47% said a major reason for dropping out was that “classes were not interesting” and they were “bored”; 88% of drop outs had passing grades.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- The National Education Technology Plan recommended that every student have access to e-learning opportunities and every teacher have access to e-learning training.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Virtual schools and online learning can help provide equal access to rigorous courses for all students, reducing inequities that exist across the educational system.
- Today 6,000 talented young people will drop out of school.<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Today only 11 states require credits in a foreign language for students to graduate.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Today African American students are 14% of those in school, but only 7% of those taking Advanced Placement exams.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Today two-thirds of high school students will be bored in at least one class.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Today 15 million students who need mentors do not have them.<sup>xxviii</sup>
- 69% of the public say that they “would be willing to have a child [of theirs] go through high school taking some academic courses over the Internet.”<sup>xxix</sup>

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- <sup>xiv</sup> *A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning* (2010)
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